FernGully: The Last Rainforest

The film tells the story of a rainforest near Mount Warning, Australia, called Fern Gully. Beyond Fern Gully, a curious fairy girl named Crysta saw a part of the world she and her friends have never seen before and claim humans live on the nearby Mount Warning Mountain. But the wise forest fairy and motherly figure of Crysta, Magi Lune, claims that humans are now extinct. In the opening scene, she says that the spirit of destruction and all that is poisonous to nature, which emerged from Mount Warning while triggering an explosion that destroyed much of the forest, never to return and presumed dead, fled, driven away by the attack of an enemy known as Hexxus. Hexxus was defeated and trapped within a tree by the fairies. Crysta mentions a black cloud she saw growing above the mountain, and Magi describes it as smoke. But, Magi nervously denies the speculation of Crysta that the smoke could be Hexxus, saying, "there isn't a force in nature that could release him, and there are no poisons here on which he can feed. Hexxus is trapped for all time." It indicates that Magi shares the concerns of Crysta, but is afraid to say so openly.

Crysta heads to Mount Warning, where she finds dead trees all marked with red aerosol paint exes and crosses that mark them for cutting. Also, she befriends a mentally ill but comical fruit bat called Batty Koda who has been experimented on by humans and now has wires and antennas fused into his head. She encounters male humans, and while attempting to prevent him from being crushed by a branch, unintentionally shrinks one named Zak. He gets caught on a tree spider web that's just about to go through a shredder of a tree. When Batty swoops in, she attempts to get him off, grabs them both from the spider web, and blames Crysta for almost killing her because she didn't listen to him.

Zak is on a wild journey with Crysta and Batty, almost eaten by a hungry Goanna lizard called Lou, and falls in love with Crysta suddenly. Meanwhile, while trying to spray a fly that was buzzing around him, Zak's superiors cut down an enchanted baobab tree which Zak had unintentionally painted an X mark on. Sadly, this turns out to be the tree in which Hexxus is stuck, and he is freed by the lumbermill-like leveler machine to cut down and process the tree. Determined to take vengeance on FernGully's fairies (specifically Magi Lune) for imprisoning him, Hexxus gains strength from pollution, specifically the energy and smoke produced by The Leveler, as it can be seen as a liquid to "drink" from it. By the next morning, he manipulates the lumberjacks and their Leveler tree to knock down the rainforest in the direction of the fairies, thereby destroying their world's very fabric. Under the vocal disguise of their leader, he does this. All the fairies have not had a hint until this point as to what threat awaits them. Then Zak admits that the humans are not the same ones who protected FernGully, but the people who came to cut down the trees, and that he was one of them.

The fairies all join together and fuse their powers once the truth is uncovered, forming a protective tree cage. Magi sacrifices herself to give her strength to the fairies and even Zak, and beating Hexxus is up to Crysta and the other fairies. The Leveler is shut off by Zak, causing Hexxus to lose all of the energy he gathered from it and vanish, but he quickly rips out of the system like a giant demonic skeleton creature made of fire-breathing oil. As Magi did, Crysta sacrifices herself by allowing Hexxus to devour her in one bite and uses her powers from inside him to grow a seed she had with her to imprison Hexxus again (together with The Leveler) within a new tree with the aid of the Pips-led fairies, imprisoning him again. At the very border of FernGully, both Hexxus and the machine are both simultaneously imprisoned by the newly grown tree, which bursts into bloom. After the battle, Crysta appears, having survived her ordeal and succeeded as a magical fairy Magi successfully. She gives seed to Zak, begs him to remember everything that has happened, and sadly restores it to its human size. Zak promises to recall his adventure by remembering the seed in his hand and buries the seed in the soil before telling Tony and Ralph that things need to change as they leave

the forest behind. For FernGully, the seed sprouts new growth, as Crysta follows Pips with Batty behind her. Meanwhile, after eventually discovering how to harness her powers, Crysta takes Magi's place.

Material and NonMaterial Culture in the Movie

Material Culture	NonMaterial Culture
Fairies of FernGully and their clothing, tools, weapons, powers, etc.	Belief on the Equilibrium in Nature
Animals, Trees and other living things within and outside of the rainforest	Belief that there are Gods/Spirits that help control the environmental effects of and to humanity
Machine used to cut down trees	Love and Understanding as the key to preserve nature
Human tools, equipment, technology, among others.	Evolution of Evil and Destruction as part of the law and nature of supernatural perpetrators: Hexxus quickly begins to regain his powers by feeding on pollution.
Bat (Batty Koda) experimented by Humans: manmade or evolved by the hands of the men	False beliefs on the goodness of Humans and being the fairies' long lost friends of the forest

Science, Technology, and Society is an interdisciplinary area that explores the conditions under which scientific information and technical systems are created, transmitted, and used. Also, the effect on different groups of citizens of the said activities. Sociology in general provides the study of society and culture with different theoretical viewpoints. The major perspectives are **symbolic interactionism, structural functionalism, and conflicts.**

Symbolic Interactionism directs on social experiences using symbols. Symbols, depending on their respective cultures, have meanings for individuals in society.

As I research and explore the cultural aspects of the film FernGully, I tend to learn that while FernGully is about fairies, it also includes the history on which the film was based. The movie takes place near Mt. Warning in Australia; this mountain has Aboriginal people with a lot of legends and cultural significance. The natives of the land believe in the **equilibrium of nature** and in certain **gods/spirits** that help control the environmental effects of humanity.

The film FernGully depicts some of the social interactions in the film that utilizes symbols. The **humans** depict Australia and Mount Warning's disruptive settlers and colonists. And it speaks of greed and how people want to concentrate on their own interests and wants, and whether they destroy their environments or the lives of other living beings in which they don't care. The **Fairies** represent the indigenous people living in Australia who were too naive to believe that they would be destroyed by the settlers (humans). Also, this movie is based on Aboriginal beliefs.

Hence, the **Structural-Functional Approach** further explains the said scenarios above, as it focuses on the interconnection in society between structures that have roles that sustain the functioning of society as a whole. All other systems are affected by one social institution because if there is a dysfunction in one component, the whole system is impacted. The film is based on an Aboriginal legend that deals with a force that governs the **balance of nature but is destructive.**

The Hexxus character is based on Aboriginal mythology. This spirit came from Mt. Warning, which used to be an active volcano, the legend says, which is why Hexxus takes the form of lava in the movie. The spirit based on Hexxus was regarded as a *spirit that triggered natural disasters*. Essentially, these catastrophes were not evil because they helped control the balance of nature. **This spirit, sadly, does not know when to stop**. *Also, it no longer has to inflict damage because of too much harm by humans to the world, but only further tiptoes the balance and causes chaos*. That's why **Hexxus** is depicted as a spirit of toxicity and destruction. He inhabits the man-made machine that cuts down trees in order to represent that the destruction of ourselves is the responsibility of us humans.

To understand what is happening in the society that took place in the film, the **social-conflict approach** explores and centers on the unequal relationships between groups or categories of people.

From what I research, the film voices out the concerns and issues of and with the natives of Mt. Warning. Although Australians encourage visitors to climb Mount Warning, it is strongly discouraged by the indigenous people because it is a sacred place for them. The inhabitants of the land used to conduct rituals on this mountain many years ago, but they are no longer permitted to do so.

For several years, the early settlers and colonists of Mount Warning seriously damaged the wildlife around it and continued to do so until the government agreed to turn Mount Warning into a national park and the land around it.

The colonists who started to settle in Australia caused a lot of environmental damage. The settlers began to cut off the biodiversity that threatened the environment and the indigenous people's limited resources. Not only were there few opportunities for the Aborigines, but they had to avoid being colonized. Their history, faith, and values were profoundly affected by colonialism.

With these in mind, FernGully focuses on an environmental theme. Through its environmental theme, it conveys a lesson on the importance of protecting nature and also the need to understand that we, humans, are ***villains in terms of the relationship between nature and humanity.*** By reflecting the beauty of nature through the animation in the film, the theme, the importance of the setting, is clarified. The plot itself often explains the importance of nature; humanity is destructive, but in a way in which we do not recognize our destructive acts, not until we shrink down and discover that a community of fairies, life, and love is housed in the trees. The real-life theme is brought to attention through beautiful visual elements and a fictional tale, nature is important, we need to love it and be conscious of our actions. The current events and ideas of the time period in which it was released are linked to this theme in FernGully.

Love and understanding is a significant theme in FernGully, the movie describes love as something that counteracts devastation because understanding is found. Zak

understands the damage from his relationship with Crysta he unknowingly inflicts on the forest from love. Love grants an awareness that helps protect the forest from the devastation of mankind. The love relationship is portrayed both through the relationship between Zach and Crysta and also through the relationship between the Fairies and the forest. In the animated film, **love and understanding** are used as a way of demonstrating how to preserve nature through caring and understanding.

Bibliography

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